

Rep.Bruce Zalaski
Sen.Edith Prague
Sen.Anthony Guglielmo
Rep.John Rigby
Labor Committee
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT., 06106

February 28, 2012

To All Concerned,

I am gravely concerned about the effect the passage of HB 5291 would have on small businesses. I am a small business owner who is fearful of what would happen to my stores should the minimum wage increase. I own two Cold Stone Creameries. A poor economy and rising gas prices has greatly affected my business. The last two years I have made no profit in the business. Like the owners of many other small businesses on Main Street in Middletown I am simply trying to hold on until the economy turns around. A twenty percent increase in the minimum wage may well be the last nail in my coffin. If the minimum wage is increased my labor costs will increase approximately twenty thousand dollars per year. That is money I simply do not have, and it may force me to close my doors. My twenty employees would then be added to the rolls of the unemployed..

Like many people who earn minimum wage most of my employees are part time workers who are sixteen to twenty two years old. They work for me for between one and three years and after improving their education and gaining some skills they go on to better jobs. If you are truly concerned about low wage earners instead of putting these people out of a job you should try to make them more valuable as employees. The state should work with these employees and businesses to improve the skills and knowledge of the low wage earners. Make these people more educated and better trained and they will no longer be shackled to the minimum wage. Your attempt to raise their standard of living by forcing me to pay a wage that makes my business economically unsustainable is the easy way out, and it is doomed to failure. Every reliable study that has been done has shown that an increase in the minimum wage will cause an increase in the unemployment rate. These studies show that if the plan to increase Connecticut's minimum wage 20% is passed we can expect unemployment to increase between two and six percent. That is the last thing that we need at this time.

The State cannot continue to place the burden of caring for its citizens on the backs of businesses. It is time that the State stop taking the easy way out. Instead, take a thorough look at the problem and try to find a real solution. The vast majority of minimum wage workers are young part time workers who have not finished high school, and in many cases do not even have a GED. The state should focus on getting young people to get a high school diploma, not a GED, and getting the training and education that will make them valuable to their employer.

It's not that I am greedy or don't care about my Crew. Quite the contrary; I would like to keep my doors open and continue to employ these wonderful young people. It's not about making more money, it's about survival.

Now is not the time.

Sincerely,

Priscilla Harnesk
Middletown, CT.